

Whatcom Children's Administration and Whatcom Family & Community Network
Proposal for Partial Blockgrant of CA Funding for 2009-2011

DRAFT

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Background/Issue

A significant number of children and youth with behavioral and mental health challenges are moving from one temporary placement or solution to another without a healthy or stable resolution. Many families do not have the supports they need to either keep these children in foster care or have them return home. While our communities and the Children's Administration are providing some miraculous results for many children, some remain unable to find a stable plan to support them out of dependency. These families and children continue to move from one crisis to another, one short-term solution to another. They remain a high cost to the Children's Administration and face little or no hope of successful reconciliation. Many continue in the system until the children age out. Current staff and service contractor models are unable to provide the unique and complex support that many of these families need. Our communities need to step up and try new and creative real, community-based solutions if we expect to successfully move these families into any stable or healthy living environment.

The Opportunity

The Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS), both locally in Whatcom County and at the regional level, have created a strong partnership with the community-based Whatcom Family & Community Network. We have already piloted some exciting and promising community-based strategies to engage the full community with families that historically remained socially isolated and at-risk of re-abuse or neglect. We believe this work has laid the foundation to take the next step and actually develop a more complete system where these harder-to-serve families are referred to a community-based team that, with additional resources and mental health supports, can create a plan that will work. We believe we can link informal and formal supports to families that will create a network of social support that can move families out of dependency and sustain positive outcomes so that they can truly be able to thrive.

Pilot Proposal

We are requesting authorization of a blockgrant of Behavioral Rehabilitation Services funding designated for Whatcom County for the 2009-2011 biennium. The amount would be determined through the planning process that would happen between August and December 2008. We will use this funding to create a community model of joint DCFS and contract staffing and services to serve 15-20 of the most challenging and expensive families for DCFS to serve in Whatcom County. We develop this model prior to the blockgrant funding with first building a neighborhood support system in key neighborhoods in Whatcom County then testing it with 2-5 families October 2008- March 09. We will create a project advisory and management team of members from our Family-to-Family Advisory Committee with residents, families, providers, and key DCFS staff. They will oversee the development of outcome-based protocols and policies for the pilot project and processes to oversee, monitor, and evaluate the results. We will use funds for a combination of project staff to serve families directly and build the community social networks and "teams" needed for each family and to provide wrap-around informal and formal support services based on each family's plan developed by

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the community-DCFS family team. During the project, we will use the newly developed web-based database, the WISH Family Journal, to assist each family and their "team" of supports to communicate efficiently and track their results.

We ask that this funding be authorized to be block granted to the Network upon the agreement of the DSFS and community member Advisory/Management team that the plan to implement this pilot is sound and the structure needed to achieve the group's, the families', and community's goals is in place.

Timeline

August – October 2008

WFCN will partner with DCFS and local providers to create, add, and implement a community-based wrap around plan for 2-4 children and youth being served under a current service contract.

October 2008 – February 2009

Evaluate and adapt process as needed, continuing to accept 3-5 child referrals. Form Advisory/Management Team and design model to implement service plans with a blend of resident and provider-based services.

March-June 2008

Develop key outcomes, contracts and agreements needed, protocols and policies, and referral process for pilot project. Identify potential staff and set up fiscal/management systems needed.

Results Expected

Our overall goal is to reduce dependencies and group care placements of the 15-20 children served in this two year pilot project by 50% over two years. We will do this through increasing social supports, parenting supports, and social skills among family members needed for family stability. We will also develop integrated and coordinated service plans for families that link key mental health, drug and alcohol, health, and educational supports to the overall plan. We expect resulting reduction in the State cost of serving these families by \$400,000 or more over two years by increasing healthy outcomes for the children and families and shorter times needed high cost state services.